

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Office Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 20-23, 26 and 27 are now pending in this application. Claims 20 and 26 are independent. Claims 24, 25 and 28-31 have cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Initially, Applicants' undersigned representative wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during the telephonic interview of January 8, 2009. Applicants' representative telephoned the Examiner to determine the status of the Response filed after final rejection on November 10, 2008. The Examiner advised that a procedural delay had prevented docketing the application for his review, but that the Response overcame the rejections then of record.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 20-23, 26 and 27 are allowed. These claims have not been amended herein, and, therefore, remain in condition for allowance.

Claims 24, 25 and 28-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Since Claims 24, 25 and 28-31 have been cancelled, these rejections are deemed moot. The foregoing actions have been taken without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter, and without conceding correctness of the rejection, but rather strictly to obtain an earlier allowance and to expedite issuance.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowability are requested.

This Amendment After Final Rejection does not raise new issues, is an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, and is believed to clearly place this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants earnestly believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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